

5/15/91

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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 CIAE-00 ICA-11 DODE-00 NSAE-00
SY-05 HA-06 PA-01 DCT-02 SYE-00 SP-02 SPRS-02
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P 151105Z MAY 81
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9535

[REDACTED] SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3578

EO 12065: RDS-4 5/15/91 (FRIEDMAN, TOWNSEND B.) OR-P
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJECT: ALLEGED DISAPPEARANCE AND MURDER BY OFFICIAL AGENTS

1. (U) SUMMARY. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ALLEGE THAT SECURITY FORCES KIDNAPPED AND MURDERED A MAN IN THE PROVINCE OF SAN JUAN LATE LAST MONTH. THEY HAVE BEGUN A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THIS ALLEGATION. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES HAVE BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION WHAT THEY ALLEGE WAS THE DISAPPEARANCE AND MURDER LATE LAST MONTH OF AN ARGENTINE BY SECURITY AGENTS. THE CASE INVOLVES HORACIO ALBERTO CASTRO WHOSE BODY WAS FOUND APRIL 26 IN THE ARGENTINE PROVINCE OF SAN JUAN. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS AND TO HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES, THE FOLLOWING EVENTS PRECEDED THE DISCOVERY OF CASTRO'S BODY:
-- ON APRIL 22 TWO VEHICLES CARRYING SEVEN MEN ARRIVED AT THE CASTRO FAMILY HOME, LOCATED IN THE PROVINCIAL CITY OF SAN JUAN (THE CAPITAL OF THE PROVINCE OF THE SAME NAME WHICH BORDERS SAN LUIS PROVINCE);
-- FOUR OF THE MEN, WHO WERE ARMED, ENTERED THE HOME SHOWING CASTRO'S SISTER CREDENTIALS IDENTIFYING THEM AS MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL POLICE;
-- THE MEN DROVE CASTRO AWAY. THE FEDERAL POLICE IN SAN JUAN DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF HIS ARREST AND THE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS
Margaret P. Gafeld, Director
X Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s):
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date Declassify on Reason

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FAMILY COULD NOT LOCATE HIM FOR THE NEXT FOUR DAYS;
- ON APRIL 26 THE FAMILY WAS INFORMED THAT A BODY,

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LATER IDENTIFIED AS CASTRO'S, HAD BEEN DISCOVERED NEAR THE BORDER BETWEEN SAN JUAN AND SAN LUIS PROVINCES, ABOUT 80 MILES FROM CASTRO'S HOME. THERE WERE ABOUT 30 9MM BULLETS IN THE BODY. THE VICTIM'S SHOELACES AND BELT HAD BEEN REMOVED AND WERE FOUND NEAR THE BODY.

3. [REDACTED] A LAWYER FROM THE CENTER FOR LEGAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES (CELS) TRAVELED TO SAN LUIS TO LOOK INTO THIS CASE. HE ASSERTS THAT IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE CHIEF OF THE POLICE IN THE PROVINCE, A RETIRED ARMY LTCOLONEL NAMED MARQUEZ, THE LATTER AVERRED THAT THE MEN WHO CARRIED OUT THE KIDNAPPING AND MURDER OF CASTRO WERE "PROFESSIONALS." HE ALLEGEDLY ADDED THAT BY PROFESSIONALS HE MEANT MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL POLICE OR THE ARMY WHO HAD COME INTO THE PROVINCE FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE TO CONDUCT THE OPERATION. LT.COL. MARQUES REPORTEDLY PROMISED TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY THE KILLERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES BELIEVE THAT HE IS TRYING TO MAKE GOOD ON THAT COMMITMENT. THEY ATTRIBUTE HIS RATHER REMARKABLE COMMENTS ON THE POSSIBLY IDENTITY OF THE FORCES INVOLVED IN THIS MURDER TO HIS ANGER THAT OUTSIDERS HAD CONDUCTED THIS OPERATION WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY IN AN AREA WHERE HE IS NOMINALLY IN COMMAND.

4. [REDACTED] A NEWSPAPER IN SAN JUAN ATTRIBUTED TO UNIDENTIFIED SOURCES A REPORT THAT CASTRO HAS BEEN "AN ACTIVE SUBVERSIVE MILITANT AND MAY HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE PAST IN TUCUMAN AND OTHER OPERATIONS." THE PAPER HAS PRIVATELY STATED THAT THIS INFORMATION CAME FROM THE POLICE. HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THIS

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REPORT, STATING THAT THE CHIEF OF POLICE HAS PRIVATELY DENIED ITS ACCURACY. THESE SOURCES STATE THAT CASTRO WAS A LABOR ACTIVIST AND A "DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST." WHEN PRESSED ON THIS POINT THEY CONFESS TO NOT KNOWING THE SOCIALIST AFFILIATION OF CASTRO AND SAY THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE PST -- A NONVIOLENT, TROTSKYIST PARTY WHICH IS BANNED IN ARGENTINA.

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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5. [REDACTED] HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES ARE MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO FOCUS ATTENTION AND PUBLICITY ON THIS STORY. THEY TELL US THAT THE MOTIVE IS TO BLOCK LIFITING OF HUMPHREY-KENNEDY.

6. [REDACTED] COMMENT: A CRIME HAS CLEARLY BEEN COMMITTED. THE IDENTITY OF THE MURDERS AND THEIR MOTIVE ARE LESS THAN FULLY ESTABLISHED. HOWEVER, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS HAVE ACCUMULATED A FAIRLY SOLID CIRCUMSTANTIAL CASE POINTING IN THE DIRECTION OF OFFICIAL AGENTS AS BEING RESPONSIBLE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET HAD A CHANCE TO ANSWER -- INDEED, IT MAY NOT YET KNOW THAT IT IS SO CHARGED, BUT THAT KNOWLEDGE WILL COME AS THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS PUBLISH THEIR CASE, BOTH AT HOME AND IN WASHINGTON.

7. [REDACTED] (A NOTE ON CELS RELIABILITY. IN THE PAST WE HAVE FOUND THE ORGANIZATION USUALLY RELIABLE AND CAREFUL OF ITS CHARGES. IN THIS CONNECTION, CELS CONTINUES TO ARGUE THAT ANGEL ROMANO, WHO REPORTEDLY DISAPPEARED LAST MARCH BUT LATER SURFACED IN CUSTODY, WAS ARRESTED ON POLITICAL CHARGES. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT WHEN ROMANO SURFACED THE POLICY FORMALLY STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED AS PART OF A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION. ACCORDING TO CELS, THAT STATEMENT IS FALSE. THE POLICE STATED THAT THE INVESTIGATION CONCERNED CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES BY EMPLOYEES AT A PLANT BEGINNING IN 1979. ACCORDING TO CELS,

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ROMANO HAD LEFT THE FACTORY IN 1976. THEY NOTE THAT A JUDGE IN THE CASE IMMEDIATELY FREED AND ABSOLVED ROMANO, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO HOLD HIM. ACTIVISTS BELIEVES HIS ARREST WAS PROBABLY CONNECTED TO HIS

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LABOR ACTIVITIES, WHICH THEY THINK, BECAUSE ROMANO WON'T SAY CLEARLY, WERE CONDUCTED IN BEHALF OF THE PST. THEY ALLEGE ROMANO WAS TORTURED.)

8. [REDACTED] IF OFFICIAL AGENTS WERE INVOLVED IN THIS OPERATION IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEY MIGHT BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, ESPECIALLY IF IT WERE RELATED TO CRIMINAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL CAUSES. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS BOTH POLICE AND, ONCE THAT WE RECALL, EVEN ARMY OFFICIALS WHO ABUSED THEIR AUTHORITY HAVE ON RARE OCCASIONS BEEN FORCED TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR ACTIONS. ONE OF THE MOST RECENT EVENTS WAS THE CONVICTION AND SENTENCING OF TWO POLICE OFFICERS IN CORDOBA WHO IN COLD BLOOD MURDERED A MAN THEY ARRESTED.
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